

TALENT CONCEPT IN GLOBAL AND TURKISH PERSPECTIVE

2025 January

PREFACE

As the Turkish Entrepreneurship Foundation, we have taken action to prepare comprehensive white papers to shed light on issues of social and contemporary importance. The “Talent Concept in Global and Turkish Perspective” report, which we prepared within this framework, addresses topics such as talent management and talent gap, which are becoming increasingly critical in the business world.

For the last 4 years, GİRVAK has been focusing on the talent gap and realizing the potential of young people in the technology sector. In addition to its 10-year Fellow Program, it has been carrying out talent development programs with different partnerships, such as the public, private sector, and startups, since 2021. In addition to the needs in the technology sector, GİRVAK also designs customized talent programs for the specific needs of a startup. So far, 8500 young people have participated in these programs in game development, application development, fintech, artificial intelligence, data management, and project management.

Increasing competition in the global labor market forces us to redefine the meaning of talent in the age of technology and digital transformation. Talent is no longer considered only as individuals with technical knowledge but also as innovative individuals who have developed problem-solving skills and are open to continuous learning. This transformation also affects organizations’ expectations, emphasizing not only qualified employees but also individuals who can adapt to new skills and keep up with technological developments.

The “Talent Concept in Global and Turkish Perspective” report, prepared in this context, provides a global and Turkish perspective on the talent gap and talent management, addressing the main trends and current challenges in this transformation. While assessing how megatrends such as technology, green transformation, digitalization, and artificial intelligence are shaping talent management globally, it also highlights the importance of the talent gap in Türkiye and the process of aligning the education system with the business world.

This study will, we believe, be a valuable resource for professionals who want to make strategic business decisions and produce sustainable solutions in talent management.

I hope you will enjoy it.

Sina Afra

Chairman of Türkiye Entrepreneurship Foundation

Talent Concept in Global and Turkish Perspective

It is observed that there is no single definition of talent, and the global literature avoids this definition. Talent now goes beyond having technical knowledge and skills; it is considered an individual who can quickly adapt to technology, is innovative, has developed problem-solving skills, and is open to continuous learning. Especially in recent years, it is common to expect talent to be curious and motivated to learn independently. However, in general, the skills that talents should or are thought to have, the expectations of talents, the expectations of organizations, and the trends regarding talents according to sectors, countries, and verticals within the industry define this literature and the concept of talent. Naturally, this definition and the aforementioned skills and expectations are reshaped every year with the changes and developments in the world, sectors, education, policies, culture, and technological developments - especially megatrends such as digital transformation, artificial intelligence (AI), green transformation, population aging and globalization.

As can be seen in the report, the concept of talent and the talent gap is a global issue, and there are no significant differences between countries. Considering the level of globalization of countries and sectors in terms of talent and talent gap in technology and entrepreneurship ecosystems, we are facing a global and generalizable phenomenon regardless of the mobilization of talent.

Scope of the Report

This literature review focuses on young talent in technology and entrepreneurship ecosystems. The report focuses on talent in the world and in Türkiye, the state of talent, the expectations of talent, expectations from talent, trends, and the outputs of field research, especially the talent gap problem, which companies have seen as one of the most critical problems in the last 4 years. 29 studies/research on the subject conducted after 2020 were analyzed.

What is the talent gap? Factors Causing Talent Gap

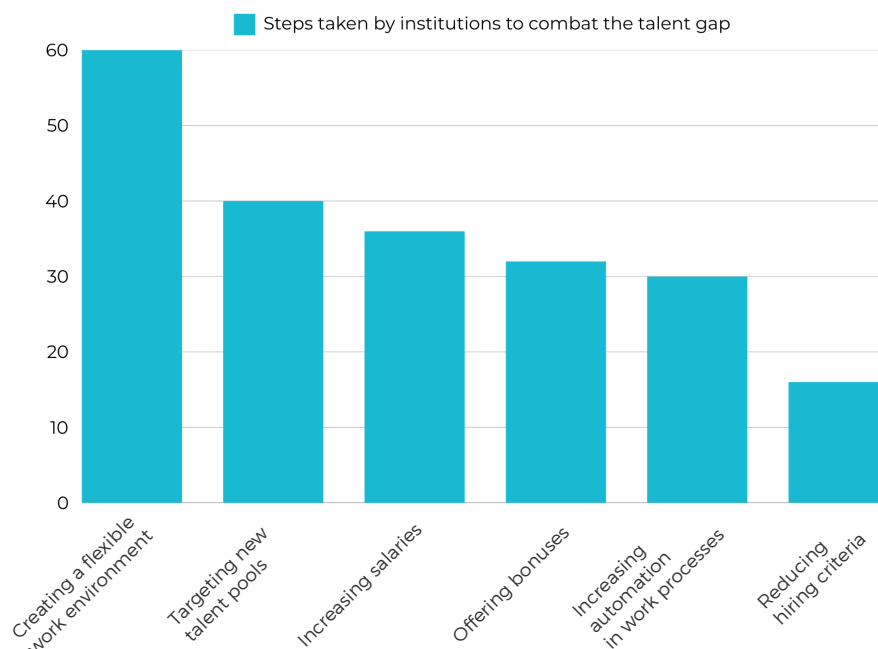
A skills gap reflects a situation where the labor market lacks the qualified candidates that employers are looking for and the skills of existing employees do not meet job requirements, which means that employers' expectations, as well as employees' needs for satisfaction, development opportunities, and favorable working conditions, are not met. The skills gap has recently become a global problem, especially in the technology sector. While capital and product development were competitive factors in the past, talent is one of the most important competitive factors for companies today.

The leading causes of the talent gap include the scarcity of employees with the skills required by rapid technological developments, skills-talent mismatch, the inability of education systems to adapt quickly enough, competition in the global labor market, and the inability of the labor market to transform rapidly to meet the needs of talents such as flexibility, inclusiveness, personal and professional development. In Türkiye, despite the young population's interest in technology, the inability of university education to fully meet the needs of the business world, brain drain abroad, economic crisis and volatility, and globalization are factors that deepen the talent gap.

Türkiye's talent gap is 76%.

The talent gap in Türkiye is 76% in 2024. This rate is highest in the technology, IT, logistics, and automotive sectors. Globally, this rate is 75%. In Türkiye, the highest level of talent gap is seen in companies with 10-49 employees, with 83%.

In the global arena, one of the main steps taken by organizations to combat the talent gap is creating a flexible working environment and turning to new talent pools. For example, European Union (EU) countries, particularly, are developing various strategies and programs to attract talent and encourage innovation. These programs aim to attract a qualified workforce, focusing on digitalization, green transformation, and high-value-added sectors. Blue cards, startup visas, incubation-acceleration programs, various tax advantages, and visa facilities for digital nomads are among these programs.



The Ministry of Industry and Technology announced the Türkiye Tech Visa program to solve this talent gap in Türkiye's technology ecosystem. This program aims to make it easier to recruit the human resources needed to move Türkiye's technology ecosystem forward from abroad. Applications such as the French Tech Visa, Estonian digital citizenship, and blue cards have been successful because they have brought in more talent than Europe has lost¹.

Talent – skill mismatch

In the new competitive environment, especially in knowledge-intensive economies, talent and skills are critical for innovation and competition. Talent mismatch is the situation in a labor market where the skills and abilities of employees and their expectations do not match the skills and abilities required by employers or their expectations. Talent mismatch not only reduces the productivity of companies but also causes them to struggle financially. It can also lead to a wide range of negative

¹ [The State of European Tech, 2023](#)

consequences for talent, such as job insecurity, limited career development opportunities, reduced income, lower productivity, lower job quality, burnout, and lower life satisfaction. A 2020 study² shows that talent mismatch in Türkiye is 62%.

Rather than technical skills, many employers think that talents lack skills such as solving complex problems, critical thinking, initiative, curiosity, creative thinking, and teamwork. The current education system focuses more on theoretical knowledge, does not provide the hands-on training needed by the business world, especially the technology and entrepreneurship sectors, and does not develop those “soft skills” mentioned above. The current education system has also failed to adapt to digital transformation and the expectations it brings.

The talent mismatch is twofold: 32% of talents in Türkiye are forced to work in jobs below their qualifications.

Talent mismatch should not only be seen as the skills of talents not meeting the expectations of employers. The study mentioned above also reveals that a large majority (31.6%) of the educated labor force, particularly, has to work in jobs below their qualifications. It is important to recognize that this mismatch is two-way and that talent struggles to find jobs and work environments that match their skills or meet their expectations.

Rising inflation, economic crisis, and declining welfare

High inflation and the economic crisis have resulted in high food and housing prices, especially in big cities, leaving many feeling stressed and disengaged at work and ready to move to places that offer higher salaries and lower living costs. Talent shortages have increased in more senior positions where remote or hybrid working options are impossible. This has led companies that cannot meet salary expectations to look for entry-level positions predominantly. Companies that have not undergone the transformation that will enable them to quickly support the talents in entry-level positions and move up to the upper levels are losing their abilities in these positions.

This situation, which is reflected in inflation and salaries, has also changed the factors affecting the job satisfaction of talents. In the literature review, although some studies still consider a high salary as the most important factor affecting satisfaction, some studies reveal that young talents, especially, now consider job satisfaction/job satisfaction and ensuring work-personal life balance as important as salary³. Therefore, talents may not prefer to live in Istanbul and work from a full-time office, even if they receive high salaries. This leads talents to prefer remote jobs, to work for organizations abroad, or to move overseas.

67% of companies in Türkiye still believe that offering a higher salary than the current role is very important to recruit talented employees. And 63% of employees in Türkiye are dissatisfied with their current salary, leading them to seek new opportunities actively. But higher salaries are no longer the

² Labor and Social Security Training and Research Center, The Mismatch Phenomenon: Türkiye Employment Market Example, 2020

³ [Görünmez Devrim Page Insights Talent Trends 2023](#)

only incentive for talent retention⁴. Most talents (97%) are always open to new opportunities⁵. This leads to a lack of talent retention and talent constantly changing jobs for better conditions.

For digital transformations that will create competitive advantage and support companies to scale, the focus needs to shift to flexible working models to attract, nurture, and retain talent.

Digitalization increases the need for rapid skills adaptation. Although the economic shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in Türkiye has accelerated the use of digital technologies in companies and households and further strengthened the progress in this area, the digitization rate in Türkiye is lower than in other OECD countries. The value-added ratio of the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector and digital services lags behind other OECD countries⁶.

Following Mc Kinsey's review of more than 30 large-scale digital transformations in different industry sectors over three years, it is emphasized that for digital transformations to succeed, organizations should focus on five main areas in both talent management and leadership: (i) attracting the right talent, (ii) developing digital competencies, (ii) cultivating talented leaders, (iv) adopting a flexible work culture, and (v) supporting digitalization in performance management⁷. It is also emphasized that digitalization is limited to implementing technology and that having the right human capital to manage these transformations is important.

The impact of digitalization and digital skills expectations on the talent gap is twofold. While some companies cannot find talents with competent skills in parallel with their digitalization processes, some talents cannot find the right working environments that have completed their digital transformation and where they can use their competencies.

While interest in artificial intelligence skills is increasing, it is observed that business environments are insufficient to support these skills.

When we look at the research, most of the talents participating in the study, both in Türkiye and in the world (80%+)⁸, state that they want to gain new skills in the field of artificial intelligence and want their work environments to support these new skills. In addition, the rate of those using AI (at least models such as ChatGPT and Gemini) in business life does not exceed 25%.

When asked what job satisfaction depends on, whether it is related to AI or not, employees state that the organizations they work for will prefer work environments where they can develop these new skills. In addition, it is seen that organizations do not prioritize supporting these skills as much as their employees and do not or cannot create resources to meet expectations. This is also seen in technology and software. According to Talent Grid's survey of 400 developers in Türkiye, 55% of the companies where developers work have taken steps to integrate artificial intelligence into their workflow and business practices. Considering that this rate applies to software developers, the rate

⁴ Talent Trends 2024: Expectation Gap | Türkiye

⁵ Görünmez Devrim Page Insights Yetenek trendleri 2023

⁶ LABOUR MARKET AND EDUCATION REFORMS ARE NEEDED TO CREATE MORE AND BETTER JOBS IN TÜRKİYE

⁷ Digital transformations: The five talent factors that matter most, McKinsey & Company

⁸ 2024 Workplace Learning Report, LinkedIn

is much lower in other sectors. For example, according to LinkedIn research, 38% of company executives in the US have taken or are considering taking steps to support their employees to become AI literate⁹.

Talent acquisition processes have also been transformed with the development of Gen AI. According to LinkedIn¹⁰, among the ways TA is integrating Gen AI skills into its workforce.

- Working with different departments on how to adapt GEN AI to their roles,
- Include relevant skills and expectations for using GEN AI in job postings
- Design or propose programs for employees to acquire Gen AI skills
- Identify and take action on skill gaps for Gen AI
- Revise their recruitment strategies to hire talent with AI expertise
- They are creating new roles and positions.

Young people and professionals predict that AI engineering will be the most in-demand profession in the future.

According to a survey conducted by Youthall with university students or recent graduates who are not working, as well as those currently working, 73 percent of young people think that artificial intelligence engineering will be their first profession in 10 years. To the question, "If you were making a choice today or had the chance to choose a different profession, which would you choose?" 28.5 percent of the young people participating in this research answered artificial intelligence expertise, followed by data analyst/data scientist with 15.6 percent, digital marketing expertise with 12 percent, renewable energy expertise with 11 percent, and e-commerce expertise with 9.5 percent.¹¹ When business professionals are asked, they predict that these professions will again be at the top of the professions of the future.¹²

In the years following 2024, the rapid rise of artificial intelligence will continue, and the demand for related skills will accelerate. Organizations that want to benefit from higher productivity and increased competitive advantage will seek a wide range of AI experts, from prompt engineers to prominent language model experts.

Interest and enrollment in artificial intelligence and cyber security training offered on online training platforms are increasing rapidly.

In a rapidly changing environment, talents and organizations must focus on continuous learning. In this regard, it is seen that talents are taking steps themselves, especially in technical skills. The fact that university education and subsequent in-company learning/development processes do not sufficiently support talents to acquire new skills quickly leads young people and talents to online education platforms or different talent development programs. For example, according to Coursera's study of 5 million learners from 3000 companies, 3600 higher education institutions, and more than 100 public institutions, training on artificial intelligence-related skills and the training to

⁹ [2024 Talent Reports: Insights and Actions for the Age of AI](#)

¹⁰ [The Future of Recruiting 2024](#)

¹¹ Youthall

¹² [The State of Job Skills in 2024](#)

support them is causing record-breaking and rapidly increasing enrollments. There is a surge of interest in cybersecurity, web development, and data management. Professional certification programs are especially in demand.¹³

According to another study by Coursera, the following skills are ranked the highest in demand:

1. E-commerce skills
2. Media Strategy and Planning
3. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
4. Customer Success
5. Business Intelligence (BI)

These fast-growing skills can make a difference in the use of AI. Therefore, there is a need not only for general AI skills but also for AI skills specialized in specific vertical sectors and fields.

Technological advancement, especially digitalization, is pushing appropriate working models away from traditional employee-employer relationships and increasing alternative working arrangements. Talents expect this flexibility from the organizations they work for.

In Türkiye, the expectation of flexibility among employees across all sectors and positions does not rank in the top three compared to global expectations. Still, it ranks among the top talents in technology and entrepreneurship ecosystems.

As the talent gap increases, organizations are trying to create a more flexible working environment for their employees, especially in the global labor market. Although the rates vary in the studies examined, in general, creating flexibility in terms of working hours and location (remote, hybrid, distributed, rowe, etc.) is one of the leading actions (60%+) organizations take to address the talent shortage.

Talent loyalty can be increased by creating a more inclusive culture.

In Türkiye, only 1 in 5 employees feel they can be their authentic selves at work; this rate is much lower than the European average. Similarly, only 1 in 5 Turkish employees believe that their workplace is genuinely inclusive.¹⁴

“Soft skills” are just as crucial as technical/digital skills.

In Europe, 40% of adults lack basic digital skills, and seventy percent of businesses see a lack of digital skills as a significant barrier to investment. This problem is not unique to Europe. According to Coursera¹⁵, despite high expectations for digital skills, organizations, and talent prioritize human skills over technical/digital skills.

¹³ [The State of Job Skills in 2024](#)

¹⁴ TALENT TRENDS 2024 · TÜRKİYE Expectation Gap

¹⁵ [2024 Global Skills Report, Coursera](#)

Expectations for skills such as machine learning, data science, and programming languages are globally valid. On the other hand, it is more difficult to make a global generalization about the “soft skills” needed. For example, in Peru, there is a tendency to focus on skills such as culture and resilience, while in Canada, storytelling and social media skills come to the fore.

Soft skills that are considered most important in Türkiye in 2024;

- Creativity & Originality
- Analysis & Problem Solving
- Collaboration & Teamwork
- Leadership & Social Impact
- Taking Responsibility & Reliability
- Active Learning and Curiosity

Finding talent is particularly challenging for early-stage startups financially and poses a barrier to scale.

The lack of specialized talent in Türkiye's startup ecosystem, especially in specific industries, poses a serious problem. Startups that fail to attract the right talent struggle to develop their products and run their business processes efficiently. This negatively affects their competitiveness. The talent gap is even more pronounced, especially in highly specialized sectors such as fintech and blockchain. To close this gap, startups and supporting organizations may need to offer higher salaries to attract the necessary talent. However, this strategy may not be sustainable in early-stage startups due to limited resources.

In addition to all this, young people are increasingly preferring to work in startups. Even if a high salary cannot be offered

- Flexibility in working hours/location/arrangement
- Experiencing a higher sense of belonging due to participation in decisions, an inclusive culture, being part of success stories, etc.
- The recruitment processes of startups differ from those of corporate companies, and the recruitment process is planned as an experience,
- A competitive environment that challenges their skills and themselves,
- Transparency,
- Opportunities for personal development as well as professional development,
- Less vertical hierarchy

Talents prefer to work in startups.

The demand for green skills is significantly outpacing the rate of talent increase with these skills.

Green skills are “the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required to support, develop, and live in a society that reduces the impact of human activities on the environment.” As companies adopt sustainable practices, the skills of their employees risk being left behind. Transitioning to a

low-carbon economy requires systemic changes and investment from companies and governments. The demand for green skills is already outstripping what the workforce has to offer, and failing to develop them puts green transformation and business performance at risk. Only one in eight workers worldwide possess one or more green skills. In other words, seven out of eight workers do not have a single green skill. Between 2022 and 2023, the proportion of green talent in the workforce grew by 12.3%, while job postings requiring at least one green skill grew twice as fast at 22.4%¹⁶.

Employers expect technical skills to change by 54% to adapt to more sustainable practices. The most significant change is in sustainability – green skills.

Featured green skills:

- Carbon Footprint Calculation
- Environmental Law
- Sustainability Reporting
- Sustainability Consulting
- Radiation Safety
- Climate Data Analysis
- Creativity and Adaptability

New talent pools

In this period, which is called the VUCA – Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity – age of uncertainty, where we face uncertainties such as economic-political instability, technological developments, pandemics, etc., companies need to develop a new approach to Talent Management processes.

While the number of talent consultancy companies is increasing, in addition to MT (Management Trainee) programs, talent programs are also being implemented to meet the rapidly changing expectations of the transforming business world to accelerate the participation of young people in employment as new talents or to change their careers or advance in their careers by acquiring new skills. These programs can be short-term programs such as boot camps that respond directly to the organization's needs and facilitate the evaluation process of the right talents or holistic programs that provide technical and social skills that prepare for the technology ecosystem. Organizations can also implement external talent programs. These programs can be designed to meet a company's specific needs, or they can be designed for a sector, vertical, or to strengthen a specific skill set.

Conclusion

Megatrends such as digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI), green transformation, population aging, and globalization are reshaping societies and economies. To capitalize on the opportunities brought by these profound transformations and build a better future, it is now even more critical to strengthen skills systems and develop skills that support a strategic vision for

¹⁶ [Global Green Skills Report 2023, LinkedIn](#)

economies and societies. At this point, we need to look at the talent and talent gap problem from two perspectives. In Türkiye, the main reasons organizations cannot find the right talent include the education system's lack of relevance to the business world, inadequate technology training, and a lack of a supportive environment that fosters soft skills. However, it is also challenging for talents to find job opportunities where they can use their skills, realize their potential, and continue to learn and develop throughout their working life. In this context, Türkiye needs to create new talent pools, continue to design internal and external talent development programs, and transform university education to meet the needs of the business world and rapidly evolving technology. At the same time, organizations must evolve into work environments open to development and where existing talent can realize itself.

To access talent, support talent development, and retain talent,

- organizations need to implement learning and development (L&D) processes
- implement continuously updated learning and development (L&D) processes that are adapted to innovations
- access talent pools outside of work and invest in new talent
- provide a flexible work environment for their employees
- provide training and development opportunities to support the development of their employees as well as steps to support their development, especially to enable them to acquire skills such as GEN AI
- increase optimization in business processes
- They need to offer a more inclusive work environment.

In addition, programs and processes should be designed to bring talents and institutions together.

GİRVAK Empowering Young Talent and Transforming the Ecosystem

GİRVAK was founded in 2014 with the mission of expanding the entrepreneurial mindset in Türkiye. With the "Fellow Program" focusing on the innovative potential of young people, we have focused on developing the talents of individuals rather than venture ideas and invested in the potential of young people over the last 10 years.

As the ecosystem grew and entrepreneurship became a career alternative among young people, we revised our mission to remove the barriers to technology entrepreneurship in Türkiye. We launched talent development programs to address the growing talent gap, especially after 2020. With the Transforming Game and Application Academy, we contributed to the development of a total of 6,500 young talents in areas such as soft skills, project management, and entrepreneurship, as well as technical skills, and to the generation of new ideas based on Sustainable Development Goals through ideathons that aim to develop solutions to social and environmental problems. Over 105 thousand young people from all over Türkiye applied to the Academy in 4 years. The Academy accepts applications for its new term between August and October every year.

As GİRVAK, realizing the importance of focusing on next-generation artificial intelligence skills, we launched a comprehensive AI talent development program by transforming the Game and Application Academy into the Artificial Intelligence and Technology Academy in 2024. This program

aims to match young people with different roles in the technology sector and develop their skills, ranging from software developers to data scientists and project managers.

As GİRVAK, we also offer sector-specific programs to meet the human resources needed by startups. Our talent program in FinTech resulted in 100% employment of the participants.

In addition to technical skills, we design talent development programs that cover soft skills, teamwork, entrepreneurship culture, sector-specific approaches, and AI literacy. These programs, which aim to meet the needs of both young people and institutions, aim to create a strong and flexible talent ecosystem that adapts to the future business world.

As the Entrepreneurship Foundation, we take responsibility for closing the talent gap and unlocking the potential of young people.

We scale our programs focused on AI, Game Development and Art, Fintech, Project Management, and Application Development by multiplying them in different verticals according to the specific needs of institutions. In addition to talent development programs, with our existing talent pool with high technical skills, we bring together talented people with high problem-solving skills who adopt a working culture and act with an entrepreneurial mindset with organizations.

RESOURCES

The sources that were examined during the preparation of this study and that may be of interest to those interested in the subject are given below.

1. [Türkiye Talent Shortage, Manpower Group 2023](#)
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